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and which they will find, and may prove to be, better susceptible of musical expression than any which is not next to intuitive in themselves and their hearers.

FRANZ SCHUBERT.

At length we have a life of this popular composer, which will be read with much interest, although we must warn all the admirers of his music that, in the two volumes now given to the English public, little will be found to enchain the attention even of the most enthusiastic, as the characteristic letters of Mendelssohn, Mozart, and Beethoven have done. Schubert's, indeed, was an uneventful life; and, accustomed as we are to associate the man with his works, we cannot but wonder how those ideal creations, which are now rapidly making their way to enduring fame, could have been thrown off by one who, according to his biographer, had "a round and puffy face, low forehead, and projecting lips," and who liked good wine so well, that he would occasionally "overshoot the mark, and then either become boisterous and violent, or, when the wine had completely fuddled him, slink off to a corner, where not a syllable, in his maudlin state, could be got from him." True, indeed, he was a disappointed man; and probably turned his back upon a world which had neglected to acknowledge him according to his real worth; but, although this may account for his never taking a sufficiently prominent place amongst the great artists of his day, it is difficult to imagine that, with a genius so profound, he should seek excitement in wine to such an extent as actually to shorten his life. There can be little question that the influence of Beethoven upon the musical world during the most vigorous part of Schubert's career, had a powerful effect in retarding the recognition of the younger composer's claims to notice; and although Schubert's veneration for the great master effectually prevented any feeling of jealousy from springing up in his mind, the fame of so powerful a rival may have cast a lasting shadow over his path, which he would scarcely, perhaps, admit, even to himself.

Like all great men, Schubert showed a wonderful aptitude, in very early life, for the art of which he was destined to become so distinguished an ornament. Michael Holzer, choir-master in Lichtenthal, to whom he was sent for singing lessons, often declared, with tears in his eyes, that he never had such a pupil. "If ever I wished to teach him anything new," he used to say, "I found he had already mastered it; consequently I cannot be said, honestly, to have given him any lessons at all. I merely amused myself, and looked at my pupil with mute astonishment." When Holzer heard him extemporise on a given subject, he would exclaim, in rapture, "He has harmony at his fingers' ends." His predilection for Beethoven was already most conspicuous; and it is related that when this composer's name was mentioned, "his eye began to brighten, and his features to light up with animation." At thirteen years of age he displayed decided genius for composition; and sonatas, masses, songs, operas, and even symphonies were produced, only to be discarded as mere sketches and exercises—a wholesome practice, which we should be rejoiced to see more extensively followed. His ear was most acute, and he was instantly aware of the slightest error in the performance of music. His own stringed quartetts

were often tried at his father's house on Sunday afternoons, when Schubert the elder played the violoncello, his three sons, Ferdinand, Ignaz, and Franz, taking respectively the first and second violin, and tenor. "If the smallest mistake were made," we are told, Franz "looked at the offender smilingly, sometimes sternly. If the father made a blunder, he passed over the mistake the first time; but if it occurred again, he would smile and say, quite timidly, 'Father, there must be a mistake somewhere'—a hint always accepted without contradiction." In as far as lessons in composition could be of any service to one who was overflowing with ideas which appeared spontaneously to shape themselves into due form and proportion, there can be no doubt that Antonio Salieri, who was for some time Schubert's instructor, exercised a beneficial influence upon his ripening powers. At first we hear that Salieri handed him over to Ruczizka for lessons in thorough-bass; but, when these lessons began, it is related "the old farce was re-enacted, for the master pronounced his pupil omniscient. 'He has learned everything,' said he, 'and God has been his teacher.'" The result was that Schubert was placed entirely under Salieri, who became warmly attached to his young pupil. We find that it was in the year 1816 that the "Erl-King" was written, the song being twice set by Schubert; the second time with the triplet accompaniment, a proof that the after-thoughts, even of the greatest writers, are often the best. When it was first sung in private, we are told, the hearers "made wry faces, and smiled incredulously at the passage, 'Mein Vater, jetzt fasst er mich an; ' whereupon Ruczizka undertook to clear up the mystery and explain the discords." Let us be thankful that "wry faces" have small effect upon genius, and that, consequently, an "Erl-King," carefully tamed down for the benefit of fastidious ears, did not displace the original. As Schubert's fame in Germany was essentially that of a song writer, and the "Erl-King" may be said almost to have founded his reputation, the history of this composition is interesting. It appears that it was not sung in public until 1820, when it was given at one of the evening entertainments of the so-called small "Musikverein," on which occasion the composer himself was introduced to the public. Although brilliantly received, however, no publisher could be found bold enough to print it; both Diabelli and Haslinger refusing to publish it, even if it were offered as a gift. The expenses, therefore, were defrayed by subscription, a certain number of Schubert's admirers putting down their names as subscribers for a hundred copies, and Diabelli undertaking to sell the song on commission. Thus this great dramatic composition was hustled into the world to help in making the fortunes of those who would not undertake even the expense of engraving the work upon speculation. When Rossini was carrying everything before him, and Italian music so far intoxicated the opera-going public as to destroy whatever love ever existed for German art, it could scarcely be expected that Schubert should be able to bear up against an influence so fatal to his cherished hopes of becoming a great operatic composer; yet it is characteristic of his truly artistic nature that he always fully appreciated the merits of his brilliant rival, although he could have little sympathy with his style. "A short time since," he says, in a letter, "we had Rossini's *Othello*. All that our Radichi executed

was admirable. This opera is far better—I mean, by that, more characteristic—than *Tancredi*. One cannot refuse to call Rossini a rare genius. His instrumentation is often original in the highest degree, and so is the voice writing; and I can find no fault with the music, if I except the usual Italian gallopades, and several reminiscences of *Tancredi*." Although ready to admit the claims of a composer whose music was so thoroughly opposed to all his pre-conceived notions of the art, he was by no means equally willing to regard Weber in as favourable a light. Being present at the first performance of *Euryanthe*, at Vienna, when Weber conducted in person, he openly asserted that the opera contained many beauties of harmony, but not a single original melody. "*Der Freischütz*," he said, "was so genial, so full of heart, it bewitched you with its loveliness; but in *Euryanthe* the very little geniality can be found." When this criticism came to Weber's ears, he is reported to have exclaimed, "Let the blockhead learn something first before he presumes to judge me." If the account of the meeting between the two composers, after these derogatory criticisms upon each other, be really true, Schubert must have felt not a little piqued when Weber said, after going through the score of the young composer's opera, *Alfonso und Estrella*, "But, I tell you that the usual course is for people to drown the first puppies, and the first operas." It is affirmed, however, on good authority, that this encounter did not cause any lasting enmity on either side; and it is even believed that, at a subsequent period, Weber expressed his readiness to have a performance of Schubert's opera at Dresden. It is doubtful whether Schubert ever had more than a chance interview with Beethoven; but it is certain that he stood, with others, around his death-bed, and that he attended his remains to the grave. It is related that, on returning from the funeral, he and his friends went to a tavern, and filled two glasses of wine, emptying the first to the memory of him they had just followed to the grave, and the second to the memory of that man of the three who should be the first to follow Beethoven; little suspecting that he himself would be the victim, and that, too, in the following year.

We have already said that Schubert's life was one especially barren of incident; but so interesting are the details of his career, as showing how a genius must continue to produce, even when such productions are stored up as useless lumber during his lifetime, that we should, did our space permit, be tempted to extract much more copiously from the book before us. It would be impossible to do more than allude to the enormous number of compositions of all kinds, which, despite the world's apathy, Schubert has left in a perfectly complete form. One by one, these compositions have been lately brought to light; and no thanks can be too great for the zealous interest in the subject shown by Mr. George Grove, the Secretary to the Crystal Palace Company, who made a journey to Vienna for the express purpose of procuring copies of his works for presentation in England. Of the success of this mission, the public has lately had the most convincing proofs; the Crystal Palace band (under the guidance of their indefatigable conductor, Mr. Manns), having unfolded the manifold beauties of these newly acquired treasures with a reverence for their worth which reflects the utmost credit upon all concerned.

In conclusion, we may say that this recently-issued life of Schubert is well translated from the German of Kreissle von Hellborn, by Arthur Duke Coleridge; that Mr. George Grove has furnished a most interesting appendix; and that it is published by the Messrs. Longmans, to whom the public is already indebted for so many rich additions to our musical literature. H. C. L.

THE ORATORIO CONCERTS.

THE first of these performances was given on Friday, the 5th ult., at St. James's Hall, with a success which decisively proved two important points,—that the *diapason normal* (which was on this occasion tried for the first time in England) is precisely the pitch required both for voices and instruments, and that St. James's Hall is in every respect admirably adapted for the purposes of Oratorio. It cannot be too much impressed upon the public that the question of pitch, although essentially an artistic one, is of the utmost importance to an audience; for, if conductors confess that the great compositions of the great masters are now approached with terror, surely a method which shall place executants at their ease in the presentation of these works claims the sympathy and support of all. That this desirable end is obtained by reducing the number of vibrations in a second of every note is a fact to be dwelt upon only by persons whose duty it is to carry out this reform; and those who go to a concert, therefore, have no more to do with trying tuning-forks and pitch-pipes than those who go to a picture-gallery have with testing the manner in which an artist mixes his colours,—the effect, and not the cause, is the matter for their consideration, and if the *diapason normal* be once firmly established in England, in an incredibly short time no audience will be aware that any alteration has taken place. Without, therefore, entering into any technical dissertation upon the number of vibrations desirable to represent the note C, the question at this trial concert was simply whether the gain to the singers was any loss to the hearers; and as, independently of the solid applause of the audience, the press has now, almost with one voice, admitted the success of the experiment, there can be little doubt that the *diapason normal* will gradually, but surely, become the recognised pitch of England.

As might be expected, Handel's Oratorio, *Jephtha*, which was the work selected for performance, excited the utmost interest; and after hearing the magnificent writing with which it abounds, the wonder is that it should have been left in peaceful slumber for so many years. True it is that much of the solo music is cut according to an antiquated form, and that a great part of it is even weak, the loves of Hamor and Iphis, like the loves of most young people, thrust into a work to make an "underplot," being a positive nuisance. To render the Oratorio attractive to a modern audience, therefore, it was necessary to make most unsparing excisions, and this, we are glad to say, was wisely and judiciously done. The sickly love-song, "Take the heart you fondly gave," and the duet between the betrothed pair, "These labours past," with its triplet runs in thirds, upon one syllable, can well be spared from a work which—where the composer has written unfettered by the necessity of supplying tenors and sopranos with pretty passages—contains some of his finest thoughts. Materially improved, however, as we believe the Oratorio to be by leaving out the whole of this music, we can scarcely see the reason why some other parts should have been cut,—as, for instance, Jephtha's song, "His mighty arm," which was strangely altered, nor do we believe that the fine chorus, "Theme sublime," should have been omitted. Respecting Mr. Sullivan's share in the work as it was presented at this concert, we have nothing but praise. The bald manner in which Handel has left his scores must be a matter of surprise to those who do not believe, as we do, that additional parts